

VZCZCXRO8396  
OO RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL  
DE RUEHBUL #1658/01 1760536  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 250536Z JUN 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9706  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 001658

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS TO AID FOR ASIA/SCAA  
USFOR-A FOR POLAD  
COMISAF FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KJUS](#) [AF](#) [PK](#) [SNAR](#) [MOPS](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#)  
SUBJECT: DEVELOPING A MASTER PLAN FOR TORKHAM GATE

1. SUMMARY:

This is a Joint message from US Embassies Kabul and Islamabad with input from US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The Torkham Gate Working Group met from May 23-24 in Jalalabad and Torkham, reviewed the current strategy and developed an action plan and statement of work for the Torkham Gate Master Plan. The Master Plan will work to address overcrowding, security risks, deteriorating and inadequate infrastructure, environmental hazards and safety concerns for commerce and pedestrians. US Embassies Kabul and Islamabad, ISAF, and USFOR-A, members of the working group, conducted a review of the Gate and identified immediate quick impact projects to mitigate problems and build community confidence in progress. The Kabul Embassy and USFOR-A are working to fill requirements at the Gate including a project manager, additional security capability, and improved oversight by Afghanistan. The next step for Embassies Kabul and Islamabad is to improve coordination between Afghan and Pakistani officials. End Summary.

2. Torkham Gate is the primary border crossing for commercial and military goods coming into Afghanistan. More than 20,000 people cross through the Gate daily. Torkham also fuels commerce in Jalalabad and further on to Kabul, receiving 20 percent of total Afghan customs receipts. Overcrowding, security risks, loss of revenue, crumbling infrastructure and long-running land disputes between tribal groups leave the Gate vulnerable. Most Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and ISAF military materiel comes through Torkham Gate or the equally vulnerable Weesh-Chaman Gate in Spin Boldak.

Developing a Master Plan for Torkham Gate  
-----

3. The Torkham Gate Working Group met May 23-24 in Jalalabad and Torkham, reviewed the current strategy, and developed an action plan. The Torkham Gate Working Group is a U.S. whole-of-government and international effort made up of members from the Regional Task Force (TF), Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), Integrated Civ-Mil Action Group (ICMAG), Economic Office, Border Management Task Force (BMTF), USAID, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), USFOR-A, and ISAF. The Group has members from the Afghan provincial government of Nangarhar, relevant line ministries and local leadership from Mohmandara district. The Embassy will engage Customs, Border Police, and the Ministries of Interior and Finance to develop Afghan national level engagement, oversight, and ownership of the Master Plan and its implementation.

4. The Group finalized a Statement of Work for a Master Plan for Torkham Gate, to be contracted by the end of the month and completed within 6 months. This plan will examine

security, customs, environmental, cultural, and engineering requirements to solve problems and enable Torkham to operate as an organized and lucrative entryway to Afghanistan. The contractor that wins the proposal will work with the PRT, Agri-business Development Team, TF, USAID, the Afghan Customs Department, Afghan Border Police and local personnel.

#### Updating the integrated strategy for Torkham Gate

-----

¶5. The Torkham Gate Working Group aims to improve GIROA capacity to secure and manage the border crossing through: upgraded facilities, reduced congestion, more efficient customs revenue collection via security force improvements and cooperation with local stakeholders. The goal is to develop a well-controlled entryway into Afghanistan to facilitate socio-economic progress, market access, licit movement of people and goods, and security for communities on both sides of the border.

¶6. The Working Group recommended changes to the existing strategy. For example, moving the bazaar to widen the existing road may be unnecessary. Infrastructure improvements devoted to re-routing traffic may be more viable. There is an immediate need to establish a contingency crossing point given the deterioration of the bridge and risk to adjoining projects. The group recommended that the customs control point should not be moved inland as this would reduce control and possibly customs revenue. Land held by customs and other GIROA ministries could be redeveloped for greater efficiency.

¶7. Several quick impact projects could advance the Master

KABUL 00001658 002 OF 002

Plan and maintain local confidence: improvements to infrastructure, construction of a pedestrian bridge, and development of parking areas with lighting for trucks and taxis to open up overcrowded areas and reduce delays.

#### Meeting requirements at Torkham Gate

-----

¶8. To meet such requirements, USFOR-A will deploy a Project Manager to act as the common point of contact and oversee the Master Plan and will request an additional infantry company and border police mentors. USFOR-A will fund the Master Plan design through CERP funds. USAID reported the initial site selection considerations for the movement of the Torkham bazaar on June 9 and will undertake a feasibility study concurrent and in direct coordination with the Master Plan work to take place over six months.

#### Opportunities for Af-Pak coordination

-----

¶9. A major constraint to improved processes at Torkham Gate is limited coordination between the Governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Infrastructure and processes on both sides of the border should be complementary to be effective, and changes will need the full engagement of both governments, including military and civilian elements locally and at the capitals. Another limiting factor is that the USG does not have the same degree of access (because of our reliance on the Pakistanis for movements into insecure areas) or resources on both sides. Our Torkham Gate Working Group includes elements of both US Embassies in Afghanistan and Pakistan (the Embassy Islamabad Border Coordinator and the Office of the Defense Representative-Pakistan). Our Joint Kabul-Islamabad working group will continue to support development of Afghan-Pakistani cooperation on Torkham Gate customs, security, trade and oversight.

EIKENBERRY